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FROM *LE MISANTHROPE* TO *LE MALADE IMAGINAIRE*

In a former paper,[1] a study of the significance of those verses of *Don Garcie* which Molière utilized in *le Misanthrope* led to an investigation of the intervening plays with reference to their subjective elements, particularly allusions to the dramatist's wife and their domestic affairs. There appeared to be evidence of a change of attitude on the part of the poet from the period of *Don Garcie*, in which the heroine is depicted as innocent and sympathetic, to that of *le Misanthrope*, in which the heroine, in a similar situation, is proven guilty of faithlessness and deceit. Intervening plays seemed to offer traces of a gradual change, corresponding, in a way, to the vicissitudes of the author's home life. The conclusion was reached that while such subjective evidence could not be decisive, it offered strong support to the theory that in Célimène, Molière was representing some characteristics of Armande, and that Alceste voiced the poet's poignant jealousy and disappointment, while other plays indicated similar subjective influence. The question at once arose as to whether a study of the subsequent plays would bear out these conclusions. Such an investigation is here attempted.

The plays have been taken up chronologically. Every endeavor has been made to be impartial, to be governed by the general spirit of the play, and by the situations or characters as a whole, though often it is merely some single trait or incident which appears illuminating.

In *le Médecin malgré lui* (August 6, 1666) which immediately follows *le Misanthrope*, the relations between Sganarelle and Martine are so far from amiable that the worthy couple come to blows, and Martine would take vengeance on her husband's honor—if she thought he would feel it. Jacqueline is on about the same terms with Lucas, who is justly annoyed by the attentions Sganarelle pays to Jacqueline. The latter, however, complains of her husband's jealousy and would not object to a good chance to "get even"

[1] "*Don Garcie* and *le Misanthrope*," *Modern Philology*, XVI, 129 ff.

with him. Apart from this very cynical view of conjugal felicity, there appears to be nothing which might reasonably be interpreted as an allusion to the poet's unhappy married life.

The two acts of the unfinished pastoral, *Mélicerte* (December, 1666) follow more nearly the conventional form of this genre than do Molière's other plays, and apparently contain no reference to the author's domestic affairs. The tone is that of innocent, confiding young love. The only discordant note is the warning advice left by Mélicerte's mother, before her death:

> Ma fille, songe à toi; l'amour aux jeunes cœurs
> Se présente toujours entouré de douceurs.
> D'abord il n'offre aux yeux que choses agréables;
> Mais il traîne après lui des troubles effroyables;
> Et si tu veux passer tes jours dans quelque paix,
> Toujours, comme d'un mal, défends-toi de ses traits [Acte II, sc. ii].

It would be no fairer to claim this as the true opinion of the poet, than to maintain that under the influence of his fondness for his precocious young actor, Baron, the charming young Myrtil of the play, the author felt his own former faith in love revive. The general impression left by the dialogues of the lovers accords better with the latter view.

The *Pastorale comique,* which was presented during the same festival (the "Ballet des Muses," which lasted for several months), in its few speeches, songs, and brief indications of actors in the various scenes, contains nothing which seems to have any bearing on this question.

The odd one-act comedy entitled *le Sicilien,* which reminds one of *l'Ecole des maris,* of *le Malade imaginaire,* and of Beaumarchais' *le Barbier de Séville,* but yet has no great resemblance to any of them, was presented during the same fête (February, 1667). It interests us as presenting Molière again playing the rôle of a jealous prospective bridegroom, outwitted by his rival and his closely guarded slave-girl, with whom we sympathize in her escape from her tyrannous old lover. Don Pèdre is made not wholly ridiculous. His part does not seem to offer the opportunity for comic effect possessed by that of Hali, the ingenious slave of the successful lover, and one is a little puzzled to explain Molière's choice of the rôle

for himself, except that it was the principal one. His wife had only the second female part,[1] the first being taken by Mlle de Brie. Hence she does not represent the oppressed, resentful slave-girl, who so ill requites her owner's jealous affection and desire to marry her, but is only an instrument to aid in freeing her and in administering a rebuke to the distrustful old man. One can hardly bring oneself to believe that even Molière could have had the courage to flout so unmercifully the jealous temperament which he himself possessed, though Don Pèdre is objectionable only in this one characteristic.

That our poet was capable, however, of this pitiless, almost cruel searching of his own heart, of laying bare with startling accuracy those hidden failings in the depths of man's soul which lend themselves to mockery, we know from *le Malade imaginaire.* In the writer who could compose the speeches of both Don Pèdre and Isidore we seem to catch another trace of that inconsistency which the author found in his own passion. His reason admitted the folly of Don Pèdre's methods and mocked at them, but his heart demanded that his wife give up everything for him, though he realized that it is but a natural instinct for a woman to seek to inspire admiration and love. Would not these be the sentiments of *le Misanthrope,* after the first revolt is over and he has gained a little calmer view of life? Do we not find the same mingled strain of protest and of yielding to overmastering passion in several plays?[2]

The following lines from *le Sicilien* are suggestive for comparison with the attitude toward jealousy elsewhere (sc. vii):

Isidore: A quoi bon de dissimuler? Quelque mine qu'on fasse, on est toujours bien aise d'être aimée. Ces hommages à nos appas ne sont jamais pour nous déplaire. Quoi qu'on en puisse dire, la grande ambition des femmes est, croyez-moi, d'inspirer de l'amour. Tous les soins qu'elles prennent ne sont que pour cela; et l'on n'en voit point de si fière qui ne s'applaudisse en son cœur des conquêtes que font ses yeux.

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[1] This is perhaps due to her angry outburst during which she slaps the thirteen-year-old Baron, causing him to leave the troupe and break up the comedy-ballet, *Mèlicerte*, presented during the same festival.

[2] Schneegans, in his discussion of *l'Ecole des femmes* (*Molière*, p. 89) advances a similar view, explaining that the poet must express his inmost feelings, at least unconsciously, and must not be blamed for so doing, even though he mention matters which family pride would ordinarily suppress.

Don Pèdre: Chacun aime à sa guise, et ce n'est pas là ma méthode. Je serai fort ravi qu'on ne vous trouve point si belle, et vous m'obligerez de n'affecter point tant de la paraître à d'autres yeux.

Isidore: Quoi! jaloux de ces choses-là?

Don Pèdre: Oui, jaloux de ces choses-là; mais jaloux comme un tigre, et, si vous voulez, comme un diable. Mon amour vous veut toute à moi. Sa délicatesse s'offense d'un souris, d'un regard qu'on vous peut arracher; et tous les soins qu'on me voit prendre ne sont que pour fermer tout accès aux galants, et m'assurer la possession d'un cœur dont je ne puis souffrir qu'on me vole la moindre chose.

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Don Pèdre: Si bien donc que si quelqu'un vous en contait, il vous trouverait disposée à recevoir ses vœux?

And sc. xx:

Don Pèdre: Comment! que veut dire cela?

Zaïde[1] (*sans voile*): Ce que cela veut dire? Qu'un jaloux est un monstre haï de tout le monde, et qu'il n'y a personne qui ne soit ravi de lui nuire, n'y eût-il point d'autre intérêt; que toutes les serrures et les verrous du monde ne retiennent point les personnes, et que c'est le cœur qu'il faut arrêter par la douceur et par la complaisance; qu 'Isidore est entre les mains du cavalier qu'elle aime, et que vous êtes pris pour dupe.[2]

Amphitryon (January 13, 1668) has been cited as a play in which Molière, basely subservient to the pleasure of the king, presented the latter's liaison with Mme de Montespan in sympathetic colors, arguing that "un partage avec Jupiter n'a rien du tout qui déshonore." Such an abhorrent point of view would not harmonize with the ideas of the poet as we have seen them developed: it is justly refuted by Rigal[3] from the evidence of the play itself. The concluding speeches imply on the part of Amphitryon a yielding to superior power, but no admission of its justice. The worst that can be said is that the whole treatment is in a very flippant tone, which is perhaps necessary to make the theme comic. Alcmène remains wholly loyal and virtuous, in spite of her infidelity toward her husband, which not only is entirely involuntary, but even redounds to her glory, since Jupiter announces that he could not have won her favor save by assuming the appearance of her husband. Amphi-

[1] Played by Armande.

[2] These same sentiments are found in *l'Ecole des maris* and in *l'Ecole des femmes*.

[3] See his *Molière*, II, 134 ff.

tryon exhibits the feelings of outraged honor and jealous rage which would be expected, complicated by the astonishment caused by the supernatural element involved.

Perhaps consistency would require us to explain the significance attached to the conversation, at the end of Act I, between Mercury, under the guise of Sosie, and Cléanthis, the wife of the latter, in which the god makes sport of her, and, like the husband in the old farce, would prefer to see her less virtuous and more agreeable. The explanation I would find in the reminiscence of the farce, and the certain comic effect of such an unusual point of view. The sentiments expressed by Alcmène with respect to jealousy are more reasonable, and more like those of Elvire of *Don Garcie,* when she was finally convinced that her lover's jealous passion was really a disease. They accord also with the idea, which the author has previously developed, of the contest between reason and passion, or sentiment.

Amphitryon, Act II, sc. vi:

La jalousie a des impressions
Dont bien souvent la force nous entraîne;
Et l'âme la plus sage, en ces occasions,
Sans doute avec assez de peine
Répond de ses émotions.
L'emportement d'un cœur qui peut s'être abusé
A de quoi ramener une âme qu'il offense;
Et, dans l'amour qui lui donne naissance
Il trouve au moins, malgré toute sa violence,
Des raisons pour être excusé;
De semblables transports contre un ressentiment
Pour défense toujours ont ce qui les fait naître;
Et l'on donne grâce aisément
A ce dont on n'est pas le maître.

And Act III, sc. vii:

De semblables erreurs, quelque jour qu'on leur donne,
Touchent des endroits délicats;
Et la raison bien souvent les pardonne,
Que l'honneur et l'amour ne les pardonnent pas.[1]

[1] Perhaps someone may wish to quote in this connection the monologue of Amphitryon, Act III, sc. iii, debating whether or not he should make his disgrace public, and may feel that the conclusion of the author is that expressed by Sosie in the last two lines of the play:

Sur de telles affaires toujours
Le meilleur est de ne rien dire.

The comment of Professor Lefranc is worthy of quotation:

Avec cela nous devons noter la tendance de plus en plus âpre qui caractérise des pièces comme *le Misanthrope, Amphitryon, George Dandin, l'Avare, M. de Pourceaugnac.* Ce n'est plus la satire d'une classe ou d'un groupe d'hommes: précieuses, hypocrites, médecins ou marquis. Molière dirige, maintenant, ses traits contre l'humanité en général, contre la vie sociale, contre les vices des hommes. C'est la conséquence de ses nombreux déboires, et elle est très sensible.[1]

I seem to detect an inclination on the part of Molière to condone, at least from the standpoint of reason, some of these failings: he looks upon them with the eyes of Philinte who sees in them vices inseparable from human nature, while emotionally he rises against them. He is inclined to greater tolerance toward the person, while still hating the vice. Is it his love which is producing this change, and leading him unwillingly toward a spirit of reconciliation?

When one compares the play next in order, *George Dandin* (July 18, 1668, Versailles), with the farce, *la Jalousie du barbouillé*, probably written in the provinces, one is at once struck by the difference in tone. The first is a mere dramatization of an incident (the husband is enticed from the house by the wife whom he has locked out) with the addition of the consultation with the doctor, a little farcical dialogue with the wife and her father, and some horseplay. One's sympathies are not aroused in the least by the Barbouillé's misfortunes. There is no bitterness, no feeling of injustice: there is only the same picture of woman's wiles as that offered by the old fabliaux, coarse, disrespectful, indecent in parts. It lacks altogether the social satire on the clash of classes, the idea of *mésalliance*, found in *George Dandin.* It is merely the conventional unhappy match in which the girl has been married, against her will, to the rich suitor favored by her father. George Dandin is more than the burlesque type of the jealous man: we are made to feel the tragedy

[1] A. Lefranc, *Revue des cours et conf.*, XVII (1909), 198. Compare with the views expressed above the theory of Becker, "H. Schneegans zur Erwiderung," *Zeitschr. für vergl. Litteraturgesch.*, XVI (1906), 194–221. He considers that all of the plays from *les Précieuses ridicules* to *le Misanthrope* should be regarded as presenting connected phases of an inner evolution, in which the ideas are continually more profound, due rather to the progress of inspiration than to chance reading or personal experiences. He attempts to prove, also, that Grimarest's *Histoire de M. de Molière*, and *la Fameuse Comédienne*, which have furnished much of the evidence for the domestic unhappiness of Molière, are both entirely unreliable; that the first based much of its information on the latter, in the composition of which he thinks Baron probably had a hand out of vindictiveness toward Armande.

of his impotence in the face of his wife's infidelity and his knowledge of it. It is to be noted, however, that in his case it is not so much real love for his wife which causes his distress, as in other of Molière's plays,[1] as it is resentment at fate and at the way the noble father- and mother-in-law impose upon him and overawe him.

One would say that this represents a mood in which the author's bitterness was uppermost, in so far as his thoughts of his wife were concerned. The husband is ridiculous, we are annoyed that he is so cowardly; yet the modern spectator feels no sympathy for the wife, and one can hardly believe that the audience of Molière's day could have done so, or that the author intended that any should be felt. This is unusual, as I think I have shown. Even in *le Misanthrope*, the reader can see some explanation of Célimène's protest against Alceste's manner and of her unwillingness to marry him, though he may not justify her; in *George Dandin* even the fact that Angélique was married against her will, a procedure the folly of which Molière always tried to bring out, does not suffice to excuse her in our eyes.[2]

For *l'Avare* (September 9, 1668), which follows *George Dandin*, we can advance no direct similarity with the facts of the author's life, nor any reference to his relations with Armande. Molière does allude to his own physical infirmity when Harpagon is vaunting his sturdiness to Frosine, and one may note that here, as in most of his plays, the old man in love is made ridiculous, and the sympathy of the spectator, or reader, is with the girl who objects to marrying him. One cannot feel, however, that Molière attributed to Harpagon any other of his own characteristics than the cough, or that he felt that a similar aversion would apply to himself. Moreover, his age would not correspond with that of Harpagon by fourteen years.[3] The supposition that in the miser he is caricaturing traits

[1] Cf. Arnolphe of *l'Ecole des femmes* and Alceste of *le Misanthrope*.

[2] Schneegans, "Molières Subjektivismus," *Zeitschr. für vergl. Litteraturgesch.*, thinks it characteristic that both of Molière's comedies in which the infidelity of a wife is brought on the stage fall within the period in which he and his wife were separated: *Amphitryon*, Jan. 16, 1668; *George Dandin*, July 18, 1668. "Is it chance?" he asks. Or does the poet seize a theme near to him? There is a pessimistic basis in spite of their gayety. *L'Avare*, Sept. 9, 1668, belongs to the same period.

[3] I do not think that the following lines allude directly to Molière's own experiences, though they are in the tone he so often adopts: "Mais Frosine, il y a encore une chose qui m'inquiète. La fille est jeune, comme tu vois; les jeunes gens, d'ordinaire, n'aiment que leurs semblables, et ne cherchent que leur compagnie; j'ai peur qu'un homme de mon âge ne soit pas de son goût, et que cela ne vienne à produire chez moi certains petits désordres qui ne m'accommoderaient pas."—[Act II, sc. vi.]

of his own father seems likewise without foundation, though I do not believe that the dramatist would have hesitated to use such material had it suited his purpose; he would have dissembled it under his usual disguise of accompanying characteristics not to be found in the original. With such precautions he should not be criticized as lacking in filial duty and respect.[1]

It should be observed, however, that the underlying theme of *l'Avare* is tragic, as has been frequently brought out,[2] and this side of the picture reappears, in spite of the remarkably successful efforts of the author to emphasize the comic side. In this respect it is similar to *George Dandin*, though every reader will, I think, carry away a much more painful impression from that play than from *l'Avare*. In this play such punishment as Harpagon receives is richly deserved, but we cannot imagine that he is greatly disturbed by the fortunes of his family after he gets his money back. This very insensibility to all things except those affecting his purse is part of the real tragedy of the play. In *George Dandin*, the penalty appears unmerited, the suffering more real and hopeless. There is more sincerity when the hero gives vent to his emotions; there is more intimate personal comprehension and sympathy. Is the explanation of this difference to be found, in part at least, in the author's keener comprehension of the passion of jealousy, and in the fact that in the first of these pieces he was venting his own hopeless disappointment, and, having done so, took up again the broader field of general satire, putting aside the problems which would bring his mind upon his own sorrows? Perhaps his anger against Armande had even cooled so far that he was again willing to admit the unreasonableness of expecting a young girl to love a man so much her elder.

It is immaterial whether or not he was already at work on *l'Avare* before the presentation of *George Dandin*, as Rigal assumes, or completed it as a hasty patchwork from various sources after the production of the other play. In either case *George Dandin* would represent the rather cruel baring of a wound which the poet could

[1] Cf. Schneegans, *Molière*, p. 192, where some similarities in the characters of Harpagon and Poquelin are pointed out.

[2] See Schneegans, *loc. cit.*, and Rigal, *Molière*, II, 162.

no longer endure in silence, and for which he sought relief by expression in this anonymous way, finding a kind of bitter pleasure in thus mocking something which was serious to him, and offering it to the sport of the courtiers, though in travestied form.[1]

There seems to be no passage of *M. de Pourceaugnac* (October, 1669), which refers in an unmistakable way to Molière's domestic relations, though the editor of the play, in the "Grands Ecrivains" series, finds that the description of the patient given by the doctors as they diagnose his case as melancholia, tallies with the author-actor's own appearance at this time as indicated by the reference, in *Elomire hypocondre*, to his "mélancolie hypocondriaque, sa maigreur, sa pâleur." The editor comments as follows:

On peut donc trouver quelques raisons de conjecturer que, dans le passage cité de notre pièce, Molière, avec un singulier courage, a plaisanté sur sa triste figure de malade et sur ses maux trop reëls; ne les a-t-il pas nargués encore dans sa dernière comédie et jusqu'au jour de sa mort? Nous ne mettrons pas, pour cela, en doute la franchise de son rire. Il y avait en lui un fond de gaieté non forcée, qui défiait les assauts de la maladie.

May he not have had like courage to jest about his moral as well as about his physical sufferings? This supposition is just as plausible as the first, and would explain many allusions in *le Misanthrope*, *George Dandin*, and other plays. The tone of the play apparently denotes a heart free from distress, but, in the case of the comedian, one cannot tell. The female characters, it is worthy of remark, are not attractive.

In the *divertissement royal* called *les Amants magnifiques* (February, 1670), the heroine is again an attractive figure. In her ideas of the honor and dignity pertaining to her rank she resembles Doña Elvire of *Don Garcie*, but she is more sympathetic, more human, less artificial and pedantic. She even displays an admirable bit of feminine malice in embarrassing Sostrate after Clitidas has betrayed the former's love for her. She also possesses good judgment and independence in her distrust of the astrologer and his science, and

[1] Cf. Loiseleur, *Les Points obscurs de la vie de Molière* (Paris, 1877), p. 327: "Le personnage de la coupable épouse de *George Dandin*, qu'il lui [Armande] fit jouer dans une période d'exaspération, satisfait une fois et pour toujours le faible besoin de représailles de cette âme indulgente et tendre. Par combien de flatteries indirectes ne racheta-t-il pas cette exceptionnelle satisfaction donnée à ses rancunes, et dont peut-être Armande, avec sa légèreté insoucieuse, ne s'aperçut même pas!"

yet she loves and honors her mother, who is depicted as shallow, vain, and superstitious, though more affectionate than most of Molière's mothers. In the rôle of Clitidas there may be occasional allusions to Molière himself in his functions of court amuser, and an expression of personal opinion in his opposition to the astrologer. One is tempted to regard the latter as a figure standing for the church, or for religious hypocrites. The rôle of Clitidas was evidently taken by Molière himself, and Eriphile may have been played by Armande. There seems to be nothing noteworthy in the relations of the two, but the period is one of reconciliation with Armande,[1] and this fact would explain the more sympathetic presentation of the heroine.

According to accepted tradition, the description of Lucile's personal characteristics in Act III, sc. ix, of *le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, where the lover, Cléonte, has his servant point out bad qualities in his lady, applies to Armande who was playing that rôle. It was not uncommon for Molière to make such references to the actors,[2] but this would lead one to attach special meaning to such speeches as the following (Act. III, sc. ix):

Covielle: Elle est capricieuse autant que personne au monde.

Cléonte: Oui, elle est capricieuse, j'en demeure d'accord, mais tout sied bien aux belles; on souffre tout des belles.

Covielle: Puisque cela va comme cela, je vois bien que vous avez envie de l'aimer toujours.

Cléonte: Moi? j'aimerais mieux mourir; et je vais la haïr autant que je l'ai aimée.

Covielle: Le moyen, si vous la trouvez si parfaite?

Cléonte: C'est en quoi ma vengeance sera plus éclatante, en quoi je veux faire mieux voir la force de mon cœur à la haïr, à la quitter, toute belle, toute pleine d'attraits, toute aimable que je la trouve. La voici. ...

And Act III, sc. x:

Cléonte: Ah! Lucile, qu'avec un mot de votre bouche vous savez apaiser de choses dans mon cœur! et que facilement on se laisse persuader aux personnes qu'on aime.

This is the tone of part of Alceste's complaint in *le Misanthrope*, and is to be found in other plays. It is to be observed that all of

[1] Cf. Schneegans, *Molière*, but also Chatfield-Taylor, Molière, a Biography, p. 417.

[2] Cf. Jodelet in *les Précieuses ridicules;* the limp of the actor Béjart, and Molière's own cough in *l'Avare*. etc.

the female rôles are more or less sympathetic in this play, including Mme Jourdain, whose good sense is admirable, even if we disapprove somewhat of her too practical turn of mind and too outspoken manner. Dorimène, the fashionable young marquise, has a very unromantic view of matrimony: she is a widow, and speaks from experience when she says (Act III, sc. xviii):

Mon Dieu! Dorante, il faut des deux parts bien des qualités pour vivre heureusement ensemble; et les deux plus raisonnables personnes du monde ont souvent peine à composer une union dont ils soient satisfaits.

Can one avoid the conviction that the dramatist is here again voicing the conciliatory sentiments of his heart, and offering an explanation of his attitude toward his wife?[1]

Sur un plus fort appui ma croyance se fonde;
Et le charme qu'elle a pour attirer les cœurs,
C'est un air en tout temps désarmé de rigueurs,
Des regards caressants que la bouche seconde,
Un souris chargé de douceurs,
Qui tend les bras à tout le monde,
Et ne vous promet que faveurs.

These lines, taken from the first scene of the first act of *Psyché*, in which Molière, Corneille, and Quinault collaborated, are spoken by one of the envious sisters of Psyché and may possibly have reference to the coquettish manner of Armande, who played that rôle. No other allusion to her was noticeable in the first act, nor in the other scenes of this play which were written by Molière. Perhaps the tone of the whole play with its mingled felicity and adversity, and the final victory of love, may present in allegorical fashion the author's own experience with this passion. It is commonly assumed that the general plan of the play is Molière's. At all events attention should be given to the fact that Psyché is an attractive character, and that those who misjudge her do it through envy, and are punished.[2]

[1] Schneegans, *Molière*, pp. 200, 207, connects the attractive picture of Armande presented by her husband, in Cléonte's description of Lucile, with the reconciliation between Molière and his wife which took place about this time (1670). Loiseleur, *Les Points obscurs de la vie de Molière*, pp. 327 ff., dates the reconciliation toward the end of 1671. This would put it after the presentation of *le Bourgeois gentilhomme*, and one would be more than ever tempted to see overtures of peace in the passages cited.

[2] Rigal (II, 231) recalls the tradition that sentiment, which abounds in the play, is due to the tender passion of the old Corneille for the young actress Armande, for whom Baron also, who had the rôle of Love, was ready to betray his benefactor.

The beauty and sincerity of expression of paternal grief found in the father's lament over the loss of his daughter has been noted by some commentators as coming from the poet's own heart and experience. Louis, his first-born son, died when only a few months old, in 1664. Molière lost his father in 1669, and other deaths occurred in his immediate circle about this time.

The gay comedy, or farce, *les Fourberies de Scapin*, 1671, has no other purpose than to amuse, and contains, so far as I can discover, no allusions to the life of the author, nor to his attitude toward Armande or women in general. The women characters are conventional and unimportant, save the laughing Zerbinette, a part written for Mlle de Beauval. Here we find another instance of the dramatist's composing his play with a given person in mind.

The jealous outburst of Monsieur Harpin, the "receveur," in *la Comtesse d'Escarbagnas*, which accompanied the *Ballet des Ballets* in 1671, in its outspoken language recalls Alceste. In her coquetry and in her desire to keep the favor of all her suitors, the Countess has a slight resemblance to Célimène. The similarities with *le Misanthrope* end here, however, and the few speeches which have the tone of that play, on a lesser scale, may not contain any allusion to the domestic life of the author, though they may be so interpreted. Monsieur Harpin shows real emotion, especially in contrast with the others, and this would tempt one to attach especial importance to his words. One would never think of connecting the Countess with Armande, save in the one particular mentioned. It should be observed, also, that Molière had no rôle in this part of the performance, and that this period is the one accepted for his reconciliation with his wife. This would seem to be out of harmony with our theory, but even at such a time distrust and jealousy like that of Don Garcie or Alceste would not be wholly quieted. The words cited below certainly seem applicable to Molière and Armande (sc. xxi):

La Comtesse d'Escarbagnas: Oui. L'on ne vient point crier de dessus un théâtre ce qui se doit dire en particulier.

M. Harpin: J'y viens, moi, morbleu! tout exprès; c'est le lieu qu'il me faut; et je souhaiterais que ce fût un théâtre public, pour vous dire avec plus d'éclat toutes vos vérités.

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M. Harpin: Je veux dire que je ne trouve point étrange que vous vous rendiez au mérite de monsieur le vicomte; vous n'êtes pas la première femme qui joue dans le monde de ces sortes de caractères, et qui ait auprès d'elle un monsieur le receveur, dont on lui voit trahir et la passion et la bourse pour le premier venu qui lui donnera dans la vue. Mais ne trouvez point étrange aussi que je ne sois point la dupe d'une infidélité aussi ordinaire aux coquettes du temps, et que je vienne vous assurer devant bonne compagnie que je romps commerce avec vous, et que monsieur le receveur ne sera plus pour vous monsieur le donneur.

La Comtesse: Cela est merveilleux comme les amants emportés deviennent à la mode! on ne voit autre chose de tous côtés.

Taking the play *les Femmes savantes* (1672) as a whole, it contains nothing which bears on the poet's domestic relations, unless we see in Chrysale's lament that he has not found in married life the repose for which he longs, some indication of the author's own disillusionment. In no one of the female characters, however, do we discover the characteristics which we have found associated with Molière's wife, unless it be the sharp retorts of the Armande of the play. The ills from which Chrysale's household is suffering are totally different from those which troubled Molière's domestic life, except in so far as they are contests of authority not uncommon to the married state. One would explain the attractive character of Henriette as embodying the poet's ideal, quite different in her calm reasonableness, depth of sincerity, and common sense, from the Célimènes and Angéliques who have impressed us as probable likenesses of Armande. Henriette in certain phases of her character is more like Eliante, the foil to Célimène.

We would interpret this play as proceeding from a period of resignation on the part of the author. He has ceased to rail against the faults of his wife: these, he realizes, are common to many other young people of the day. He contents himself with presenting the opposite ideal, which, at the same time, furnishes a contrast to other equally reprehensible foibles of the weaker sex. He may even have congratulated himself on being free of them, in his family. Molière might very well have said with Chrysale:

> J'aime fort le repos, la paix, et la douceur,
> Et ma femme est terrible avecque son humeur,

but one would hardly regard as applicable to him and to Armande the lines which follow in the same speech:

> Pour peu que l'on s'oppose à ce que veut sa tête,
> On en a pour huit jours d'effroyable tempête.
> Elle me fait trembler dès qu'elle prend son ton;
> Je ne sais où me mettre, et c'est un vrai dragon;
> Et cependant, avec toute sa diablerie,
> Il faut que je l'appelle et "mon cœur" et "ma mie."

In *le Malade imaginaire*, Molière's last play, presented in 1673 and composed during the preceding months, we find another disagreeable female rôle, that of Béline, the intriguing stepmother. It would be possible and in keeping with our thesis, if we saw in her a further development in the attitude of Molière toward his wife; he has now reached the point after their reconciliation where he feels that she cares for him, or pretends to, only for his money.

It is not impossible that renewed distrust and disappointment in Armande may have found vent in the character of Béline. To have done so openly would have been repugnant to all the finer sensibilities; hidden under the disguise of such a character the vengeance would be for the dramatist alone. But there is little foundation in the play for this interpretation: there is hardly more than certain references to the purely self-interested motives of the stepmother. One might imagine that Armande had not shown much love for her husband and was not inconsolable after Molière's death, but arguments of this type I have avoided. The most one can say is that Molière had some reason for presenting, in a cutting manner, the self-seeking woman who marries for money, and who is not merely the traditional stepmother.

As Armande took the rôle of Angélique, the daughter, who represents a very different type, affectionate and likable, it would be quite reasonable to assume that it is in this personage that one should seek allusions to Molière's wife. The meaning would be entirely changed then, and he would seem to be putting into her mouth a new expression of faith in the purity of her motives, when he has Angélique say:

> Chacun a son but en se mariant. Pour moi, qui ne veux un mari que pour l'aimer véritablement, et qui prétends en faire tout l'attachement de ma

vie, je vous avoue que j'y cherche quelque précaution. Il y en a d'aucunes qui prennent des maris seulement pour se tirer de la contrainte de leurs parents, et se mettre en état de faire tout ce qu'elles voudront. Il y en a d'autres, madame, qui font du mariage un commerce de pur intérêt, qui ne se marient que pour gagner des douaires ... [Acte II, sc. vii].

Such conflicting evidence brings home again the hazard of drawing conclusions from subjective interpretation. It is far simpler, and it may be wiser, to resist the temptation to penetrate beneath the surface, accepting only what is universal and eternal in the dramatist's picture of life. Nevertheless, one must feel that in his flouting of the imaginary invalid, with his abject fear of death and the doctors, the really sick dramatist courageously took elements which he found in his own heart, and which he recognized as universal, but which in their manifestations were ridiculous and hence available for comic effect. In the impulses of his heart, to which he may or may not yield, the "great observer" sees the source from which spring the vagaries, obsessions, and vices which appear ridiculous in other people. He seizes upon these in a personage whom he permits to be dominated by them, combines them with others, and places him in a situation which will give them full play; by means of a little exaggeration—the comic writer's magnifying glass—he lays them bare in all their ugliness or absurdity, but always from the amusing side, and impersonally, or, at least, impartially.[1]

If he does this for his own heart, it is equally probable that characteristics of the people around him reappear in the figures which move about his comic individual, and that his own domestic life would reappear in some form. It is hardly to be denied that this has been proven for some plays. It is very likely, also, that conflicting tendencies or inconsistencies in the same individual may appear as characteristics particularly stressed in different personages. The evidence shows, in my opinion, that the subjective element is much stronger in some plays than in others. And this, also, is

[1] Schneegans, *op. cit.*, represents Molière as expressing the sufferings of his heart not in song, for he was not a lyric poet, but in comedy, citing this play. And, again, as a humorist, he sees him laughing, not only at others, but, "tears in his eyes," at himself. The same interpretation of the poet's self-analysis appears in Ed. Fournier's *Le Roman de Molière* (Paris, 1863). He shows him "endeavoring to translate into smiles for the public all his secret melancholies," especially at the time of *le Misanthrope*, when his heart "should have burst in sobs, for he suffered all that a loving heart can suffer."

what one would expect. It was when the dramatist's emotions had been especially stirred that he relieved them by giving them expression in his plays, and the lover of Molière who has tried to come close to him is aware of this as he reads: there is a current running through them corresponding, in a way, to the author's emotional experiences, particularly to his feelings toward his wife. This appears to be true after *le Misanthrope*, as in that play, and before it. The tone is different, it is gayer and more tolerant when he is seeking reconciliation with his wife, or is just reconciled (*le Bourgeois gentilhomme*); in that of *George Dandin*, or *Amphitryon*, jealous pessimism, or cynicism, seems to predominate. At other times he appears less concerned or more resigned (*les Femmes savantes*), merely poking fun at the stock butt of the jester, the henpecked husband. Or, again, the tone of the play is wholly that of the farce (*les Fourberies de Scapin*).

Perhaps the writer has been led astray by too great attention to a single question, but he has tried to avoid exaggeration; to his mind, the connection is clear between the life of the poet and the general spirit of the plays, though it is illustrated sometimes only in an isolated scene. Molière has generalized, as does Alceste, from his own personal experiences, but he has rectified these generalizations by broader observation and wider sympathy with all that is human. With the heart of Alceste he combines the head of Philinte: he can see and ridicule his own shortcomings as he does those of his fellow-men. It is this factor which causes his plays to be mirrors in which his contemporaries might and did see themselves, or, more frequently, their neighbors. Here too we may see the people of our own day, not merely distorted, as in the magic mirror of the side-show, but rather like the figures of a fancy-dress ball, with the costumes and the mannerisms of the age of Louis XIV. Among them we observe, from time to time, the figures of the painter himself and of his wife, and, as we look, they are not figures merely, but living personalities, more real because of what we know about their lives and their difficulties.

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